

The School Board Corner

By Tom Villacres, Garrisonville District
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Happy Holidays! I hope this newsletter finds you enjoying the season and satisfied that your students are well on their way to a successful school year. As I write this, we have just finished receiving public input on our budget priorities and the block scheduling evaluation plan. In December and continuing through January and February, we will be holding public hearings and public meetings on necessary redistricting actions to support the opening of the new middle school beside Grafton Village Elementary and the new elementary school in Austin Ridge subdivision. Both of these schools are set to open in September 2006.

Setting budget priorities for the Superintendent's funding request was just the first of many steps in our annual budget process. On November 15th, the School Board held a public hearing for input to the Superintendent's funding request. In January, the Superintendent will present her funding request and, following several public hearings, the School Board will vote in March on a budget request to be delivered to our Board of Supervisors. Please go to the www.staffordschools.net website for exact dates of public meetings and hearings. You will also be notified in the newspapers and school newsletters.

The School Board also encourages residents to get involved in the redistricting process. Many students and parents will be excited to hear that they will be attending one of the new schools. In some cases, students may move from one existing school to another existing school in order to eliminate as much overcrowding as possible. We will do our best to keep moves to a minimum, but we must also make sure that we provide the best learning environment possible for all students. As always, you can count on having a say in the process. Notices of the hearings will be provided to affected families, in the local newspapers, on our website and in school newsletters. We often make changes to proposed redistricting plans based on input from the public.

You may also be interested to know that our Citizens' Budget Advisory Committee will be reviewing and commenting on the proposed budgets and the Long Range Planning Advisory Committee will be participating in the redistricting proposals. These committees are made up of citizen representatives appointed from each voting district by the School Board member. This is another avenue that the Board has been using to receive public input on a regular basis. I encourage you to take a look at the various committees on our website and consider volunteering to serve on one that interests you.

In closing, thank you to our professional educators and our staff of dedicated professionals. We also recognize the commitment and contribution of our parents, students and community members. And we are grateful for the sacrifices of our service members and their families, as well as our police officers and firefighters.

*Tom Villacres, Chairman
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